

ENTERPRISE POTTERY, MANUFACTURING BUILDING
650 New York Avenue
Trenton
Mercer County
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-105-A

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA .

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORDS

~~National~~ National Park Service

Northeast Region

Philadelphia Support Office

U.S. Custom House

200 Chestnut Street

Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ENTERPRISE POTTERY, MANUFACTURING BUILDING HAER No. NJ-105-A

Location: 650 New York Avenue
Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey

UTM: 18.521600.4453880
Quad: Trenton East, NJ-PA, 1:24,000

Date of Construction: Ca. 1880; later additions

Architect: Unknown

Present Owners: Robert J. and Marjorie J. Pierce
420 Paxson Avenue
Hamilton Township, New Jersey 08690

Present Use: Moving and storage and electrical supply warehouse

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Significance: The Manufacturing Building of the Enterprise Pottery is significant as a primary production building of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century sanitary pottery complex. According to an 1890 map, the earliest extant portion of the building then contained work shops on the upper floors and a green room and slip shops on the first floor. Later, an enlarged building was used as a press shop and slip house, as well as a boiler and engine bouse. Enterprise Pottery, one of more than a dozen sanitary potteries in operation in Trenton at the turn of the twentieth century, was reportedly the first purpose-built industrial pottery in the United States specifically set up to manufacture sanitary earthenware.

During the twentieth century, most of the production buildings of the Trenton pottery industry have been demolished. The manufacturing building of the Enterprise Pottery represents a rare architectural survival from an industry on which Trenton built its reputation as a nationally important manufacturing center during the American Industrial Revolution.

Project Information: A cultural resources investigation for the proposed U.S. Route 1 Southbound exit to New York Avenue resulted in the identification of the former Enterprise Pottery as a contributing component of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Historic District. This district is listed in the New Jersey Register of Historic Places. Although the proposed action would not involve demolition of the existing buildings, it would have an adverse effect on the historic district. To mitigate the adverse effect, an agreement was reached between the New Jersey Department of Transportation and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, stipulating that the two existing buildings of the former Enterprise Pottery be recorded to standards of the Historic American Engineering Record.

Preparers of Documentation: Richard Meyer/ Project Manager
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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF MANUFACTURING BUILDING AND SETTING

The Enterprise Pottery property is located in an industrial area in the eastern portion of Trenton, New Jersey. Situated on the southeast side of New York Avenue, the property is bounded by warehouses on its northeast and southwest sides and by U.S. Route 1 (the Trenton Expressway) on the southeast side. The property contains two buildings, the Straw Storage Building, located on the north side of the lot, and the Manufacturing Building, located on the south side of the lot. The property, which is largely flat with an upward slope at its north edge, is bounded by a chain link and barbed wire fence. A driveway extends from New York Avenue at the northwest corner of the property and provides access to large gravel parking areas adjacent to both buildings. These parking areas are used primarily to store truck trailers. The peripheries of the lot are overgrown.

Manufacturing Building

The brick building presently consists of three main blocks. The western portion, gable roofed and four stories in height with a usable attic, consists of a rectangular block, 11 bays wide along its west facade and four bays deep. This block measures approximately 99 feet long and 55 feet wide and contains approximately 27,225 square feet of floor area. A second, rectangular, gabled roofed, four story block with usable attic projects from the center of the east wall of the first block. This block measures approximately 73 feet, 8 inches long and 35 feet 10 inches wide and contains approximately 13,180 square feet of floor area.

The third major block adjoins the south end of the east wall of the first block. This third block, which has a parapeted gabled roof, is only one story in height. It is constructed of brick laid in seven-course American bond and has a rubble foundation. Its roof ridge is marked by two gabled, clerestory monitors. This block measures approximately 72 feet long and 27 feet eight inches wide. A fourth narrow block takes the place of a railroad siding that extended along the north wall of the engine/boiler room. This block has brick side walls and an end wall sheathed in plywood and corrugated Fiberglas.

An 1890 Sanborn map indicates that the west block was the original portion of the building. This map shows a rectangular three-story, masonry block that housed the green room and slip shop on the first story and work rooms above. A small rectangular, single story masonry ell adjoined the south end of the east wall and housed a mixing room. This mixing room may have been the east end of the present single story ell. Two single story buildings were situated close to the west end wall of the mixing room.

An 1899 vignette of the Enterprise Pottery (Figure 1) showed the west block near the center of the illustration. At that time, the building apparently consisted of a flat roofed, three story block that adjoined a gable roofed, three and one-half story block. The eastern portion adjoined three oblong rectangular one to three story blocks that housed kilns and work rooms. The mixing room is not shown in this illustration; but may have been omitted as an act of artistic license.

By 1908, the footprint of the building resembled its present configuration. A narrower second block had been added to the center of the east wall of the original block, and single story blocks housing kilns adjoined the north and south walls of the original block. At that time, the original block was three and one half stories in height, while the addition was three stories in height except for a one and two story, narrow connecting bay where the addition joined the main block. The lower story of the second block was used for clay storage, while the upper story was used for pressing. The main block was divided into several spaces on each floor. The first floor contained the slip house and the biscuit room. The second story housed a pressing room and a green room. The third and attic stories were used for pressing and for storage. The third block, that had been shown as a mixing room in 1899, was used for clay storage in 1908.

In 1927, both of the two multi-story blocks were indicated as being four stories in height with an attic. A mixing room had been constructed adjacent to the north end of the east wall of the original block, and the south ell had

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assumed its present configuration. The main blocks of the building were indicated as manufacturing space, while the south ell contained an engine and boiler room. A rail siding extended between the engine/boiler room and the east four story block. The building remained part of a much larger complex of buildings with kiln and manufacturing buildings extending out to the north and west.

By 1963 these other, attached buildings had been demolished. The building is shown as largely storage space, while the ell is shown as a boiler and engine room. The railroad siding still provided access to the building. Several changes have been made since 1963. The area of the railroad siding has been enclosed with a wall extending from the east gable end of the engine/boiler house to the multi-story block. This enclosed space, presently used for storage, is one story in height, has a shed roof, and an east wall pierced by a corrugated metal overhead door and sheathed in Fiberglas and plywood.

Other changes since 1963 include the construction of an earthen ramp paved with asphalt from the north parking area to the second story level of the main block, and the addition of a shed roofed wood-framed, rectangular, single story vestibule to the north end of the west facade of the main block. This vestibule is sheathed in wood paneling.

The blocks of the manufacturing building are functional in appearance with little interior or exterior decoration. Exterior elaboration is confined to elaboration of the upper story bays on the north wall of the original block and on the walls of the multi-story addition. Bays are defined by brick pilasters, two stories in height. Brick corbeling defines the tops of the panels formed by the pilasters. The corbeling is raked in the gable ends.

The Manufacturing Building was originally fenestrated with a combination of rectangular and arch-topped windows. The arch-topped windows were confined to the two lower stories of the multi-story addition. Windows have stone and concrete sills and brick lintels. The segmental arched lintels are constructed of two courses of brick headers. All of the windows are presently either bricked over or enclosed with Fiberglas panels. Photographs and documentation that accompanied assessment information for the building indicate that the building had wooden sash windows. The west facade of the building was predominantly fenestrated by single six over six, double hung sash windows, while the attic story was fenestrated with either fixed or pivoting six-light windows. The north wall was largely fenestrated by paired six over six, double hung windows. The multi-story addition was also fenestrated with six over six, double hung windows. The fenestration patterns of the single story ell are not clearly shown. A multi-light rectangular transom is visible in the east gable end, while the clerestory monitor is fenestrated with bands of six-light windows.

The primary entrances to the Manufacturing Building are now located along the west facade. A door is situated in the south wall the vestibule addition, while a second single-light steel door is located near the center of the west wall. Steel doors are situated in each of the upper three stories of the east gable end of the multi-story addition and provide access to a fire escape. An overhead garage door opening is situated at the south end of the west wall. Two overhead garage doors are located in the west bay of the north wall of the main block. Each wood-framed 24-panel door is pierced by two lights. One of these doors is reached from the north loading dock, while the second is located on the floor above. Additional overhead doors are located in the center of the north wall of the multi-story addition and in the center of the east gable end wall of the multi-storied addition. Two overhead doors are situated in the east gable end of the engine/boiler room addition, and a third door is situated in the connecting bay between this addition and the multi-storied addition. The door in the end wall of the multi-story addition took the place of two windows, the arched brick frames of which are still partially visible. One of these overhead doors in the gable end of the engine/boiler room replaced the two-leaf doors, visible in a photograph in the assessment file. The doors in the boiler/engine room are surmounted by a steel beam lintel.

The building has a concrete and brick foundation. Exterior walls are constructed of brick laid in 7-course American bond. A concrete block chimney adjoins the center of the west facade wall. A four-flight metal fire escape is appended to the east gable end wall of the multi-story addition. End walls are marked by gabled parapets capped with clay tiles. An elevator penthouse projects from the roof of the main block.

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The interior of the building consists primarily of large open spaces. The first story of the original block has a long rectangular, open bay in the east portion of the main block, while the western portion has been divided into a series of offices extending along the west wall. Alterations to the office areas include installation of wood paneling, sheetrock partitions, and suspended, acoustical tile ceilings. Portions of the original beaded board interior wall sheathing is also present. The first story of the multi-story addition also contains a single long, rectangular bay. On the upper stories, the two adjoining multi-story blocks each have a single open floor space.

These spaces illustrate changes in industrial building technology. Industrial buildings of the nineteenth century typically employed load bearing brick walls, timber floors and roof trusses, and wood, double hung sash. With the availability of steel as a building material, and the search for improved methods of fire protection, new construction techniques began to be employed in early twentieth century industrial buildings. Steel framing replaced much interior timber framing, and wood framed windows were replaced by steel sashes.

While the original portions of the building employ heavy timber construction and wood-framed windows, the southeast and north sections of the building employ elements of more recent building technology. These sections of the building were constructed using a steel framing system composed of standardized beams and joists, but the floors were made of unprotected timbers. Single and double wood-framed windows were employed rather than modern steel sash.

The two types of construction are illustrated in two sections of the first story of the building. In the east addition, structural members consist of a mesh of steel girders joined at right angles that support steel joists running the length of the bay. The steel girders are supported, in turn by two rows of steel posts. In the eastern section of the main block, steel girders are used, but these members support chamfered timber joists.

The open spaces on the upper floors of the manufacturing building generally have floors constructed of narrow wood strips laid on a diagonal and I-beam joists and girders. These structural members are supported by regularly spaced metal columns, bolted to the underside of the I-beams. In the attic story, two angled I-beam girders are joined at the apex to support the roof, while the joists are comprised of both steel and dimensioned lumber members. A small freight elevator, situated in the center of the main block, provides access to the upper stories of the building.

The interior of the single story engine/boiler house addition consists of a rectangular space, separated from the remainder of the building by a brick fire wall. The block was originally illuminated by arched top windows. These windows have been enclosed with concrete block and small, two-light sliding windows are placed in the upper portions of the openings. Illumination is also provided by the gabled clerestory monitors. These wood-framed monitors are fenestrated with banks of four six-light windows. The block has a gabled roof supported by wood king post trusses with steel kingbolts, and the ceiling is sheathed in boards. The floor is concrete.

During the property's operation as a sanitary pottery manufacturing plant, the building was used to house several steps in pottery manufacture. None of the original machinery is extant, nor are there any fittings that reflect the building's historic role. During the 1930s, in the last years of plant operation, the main block was used as a slip house and press shop, while the multi-story addition was also used as a press shop. The present owner of the property was told that the manufacturing process began in the attic level and progressed downward so that the each subsequent step took place on a lower floor (Pierce 1995).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION/BIBLIOGRAPHY

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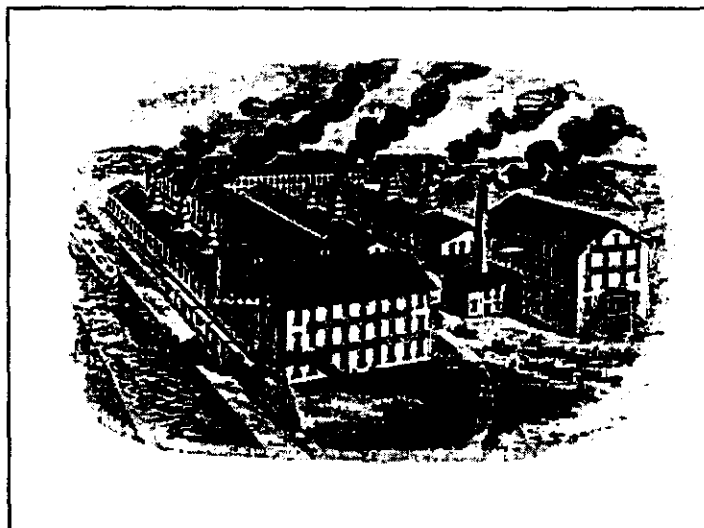


Figure 1. Enterprise Pottery (Anonymous 1899).